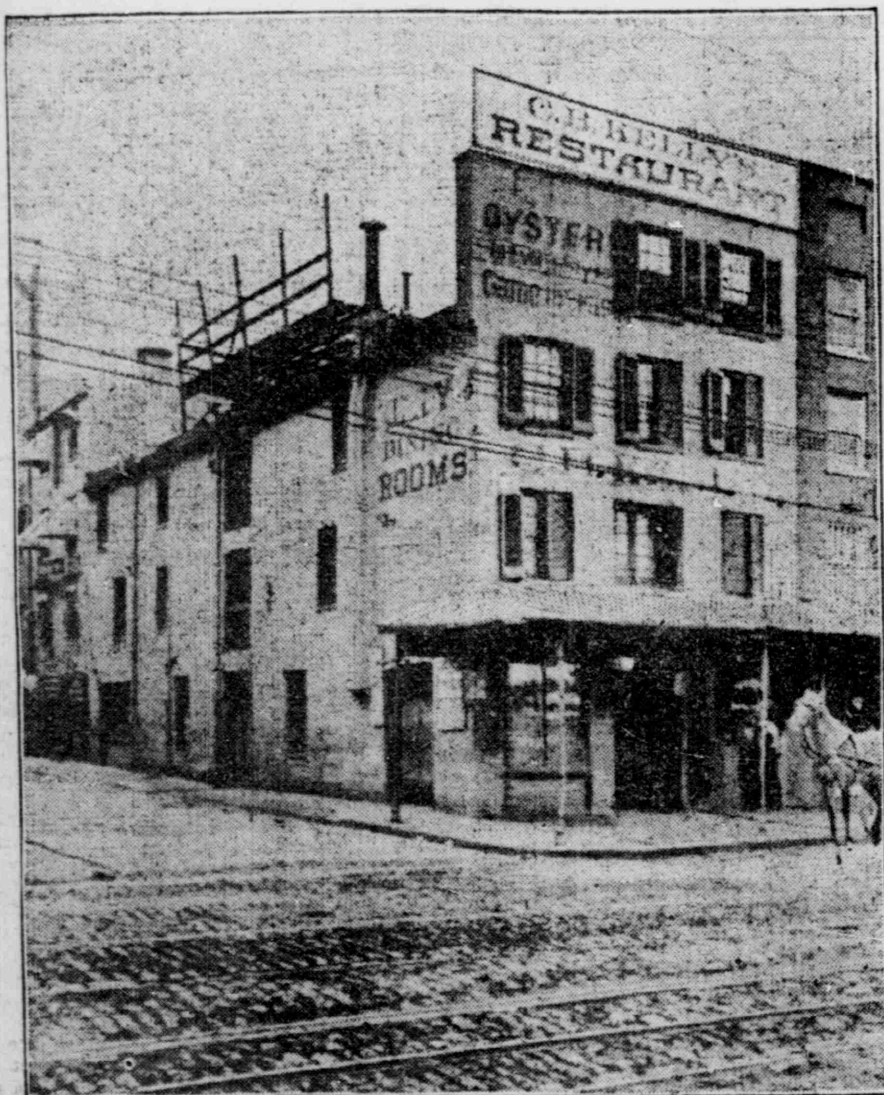


THE TRUE HISTORY OF EDGAR ALLAN POE: CHILD OF DESTINY



House Once Occupied by the Widow Meagher. An Old Haunt of Poe's.



Poe Was Born in This House.



House in Which Poe Wrote "The Bells."

His Birthplace and the Manner of His Sad Death. Traditions That Prove Him to Have Been the Victim of Circumstances. His Immortal Verse, "The Bells," Written During a Visit to Baltimore. ❖ ❖

By ELIZABETH ELLICOTT POE.

THE malevolent spirit of destiny, which keeps watch and ward over the ways of human genius, was the tutelary angel of Edgar Allan Poe from the cradle to the grave. Everywhere he turned there was the iron decree which, while separating him from the mass, rendered him miserably unhappy. Never was man more blessed (?) with biographers, who were in the majority of cases self-appointed, than Edgar Allan Poe. And each with hardly an exception has been guilty of minor or major misstatements. From Griswold to Harrison, they either make the odd statement that the place of birth or lineage is immaterial to the poetic make-up, or say with a hidden air of apology that Poe's grandfather was a Virginia wheelwright who ground out the very wheels that Edgar is credited with carrying in his head.

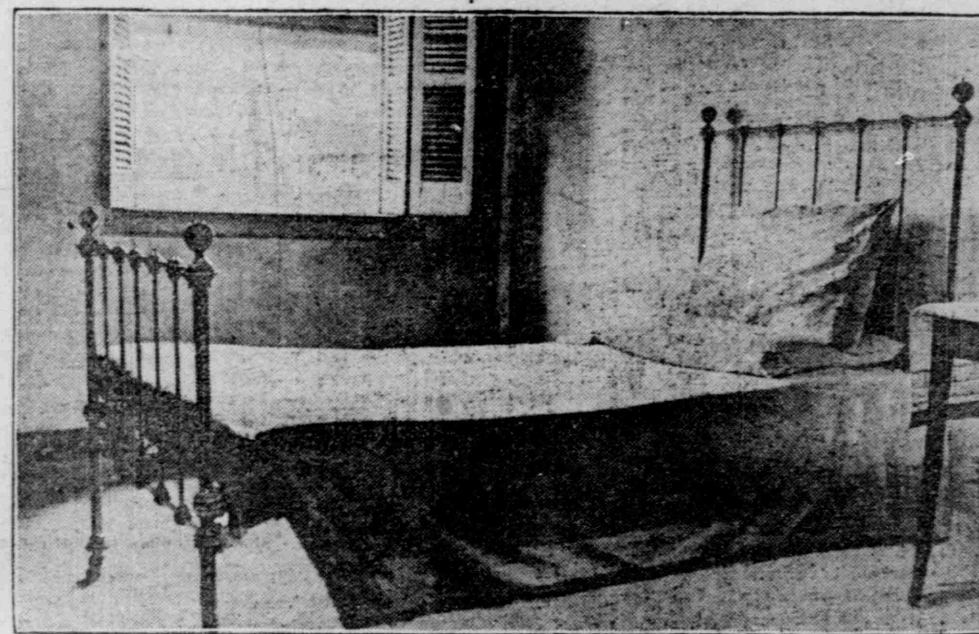
Now, with our friend Bobbie Burns, it does not matter overmuch about "the rank," and even less about the guinea stamp, "A man's a man for a' that." But no one will deny, least of all in these days of Daughters of the American Revolution and feverish search into the graves and secrets of our forefathers, the virtue of having ancestors who, from the common ground of the people, performed some act that elevated them to posts above their fellows; for that is how the primitive titles and names were earned—by sheer merit.

The name Poe, which is an American corruption of De La Poer, or Le Poer, is an old Italian one, antedating the name of the River Po, which followed the ancient spelling of the family it was named for. The family, like other Anglo-Norman settlers in Ireland, passed through Normandy from Italy, and thence through England and Wales into Ireland, where for a long period they retained hereditary Italian traits. Descendants of the family were found in Ireland as early as 1327, but now the name was in Gallic form—Le Poer. Where was Edgar Poe born? I have been shown the house in Norfolk, Va., where he came into the world. Bostonians have assured me with an awful emphasis that his first worldly home was in their quaint town; but, as a matter of fact, Maryland, not Massachusetts or Virginia, can justly claim the "weird poet of the night" as her own.

In January, 1809, the Hopkins Theatre Company, of which the poet's parents were members, was filling an engagement at the Holliday Street Theatre, Baltimore, a famous playhouse, where the best talent of the early part of the nineteenth century performed, and which was the first theater in the United States to be lighted by gas. On the evening of the nineteenth of the month, Edgar, the second child of David and Elizabeth Poe, was born in a boarding house at No. 9 Front Street, Baltimore, two doors from the shot tower. The place was kept by a Mrs. Beard, who



Room in Which Poe Composed "The Bells."



Room in Which the Poet Died.

afterward asserted that she had to provide clothes for the little stranger. The house is now utilized as a German drinking saloon, and this spot where lovers of "The Raven" and "The Bells" should worship and reverie is now desecrated by the clinking of beer glasses and the hilarity of their devotees. Boston says Poe was born in that city on that eventful night which meant much for American literature. But the "Hub of the Universe" must grant that many a poet has never breathed the combined fragrance of cod and salt air from her classic back bay.

The infant Edgar was seen by members of the Poe family when he was but a day and a half old, and on such occasions grandmothers and aunts are not apt to be mistaken. There is every proof of his Baltimore birth. The "Baltimore Sun," in commenting on his death, says: "Mr. Poe, we believe, was a native of this town (Baltimore)." There seems to have been no question of it during his lifetime; it only arose when his fame was assured and other cities, awaking to realization of his merit, demanded a share of the spoils. The world knows the history of his life until his tragic death. He was not as much a victim of drink as a victim of circumstance. Old friends and neighbors, mother-in-law, teachers and boyhood and college mates have refuted this fabrication. There is a legend in our family that stimulant in the lightest form would excite him and act almost instantly on his nerves. A cup of coffee has been known to have the effect of liquor. His "Raven" was not written while in the madness of delirium tremens. No, delirium tremens does not have that effect; if it did, how many poets of nowadays would gladly indulge in fiery liquors in the effort to also write a "Raven" or an equal masterpiece.

Added to the use of liquor he may have been, but he was not known as a drunkard during his lifetime. To be unfortunate is not to be evil. To my mind the quality of evil is never to be applied to the unfortunate. Their actions are beyond their own volition. They, too, would be honorable, but physical craving denies them this privilege. Crime is a moral starvation that should be nursed and fed until the spirit, reborn into life, casts away the crust of crime and grasps the loaf of rectitude.

"The Bells," that haunting bit of word melody, was not the inspiration of Mrs. Whitman, but a Baltimore poem written

in one of those periodical visits to Baltimore after the death of Virginia, when, with an inborn love of the Maryland city, he would return to the joy-haunted retreats of youth and manhood. The house where this famous poem was written still stands, and a visit to it last week awoke many reminiscences from its occupants. Judge Guiles, who was Poe's host that memorable night, when the wild, resonant music of the sleighbells awoke like music in the poet's heart, is dead. The room Poe quitted so quietly after the divine fire left him is still utilized as a law office, and, strange to say, is occupied by the grandnephew of Judge Guiles, A. Parlett Lloyd, a pension attorney of Baltimore.

Near Hollingsford Street on Pratt Street it was not difficult to locate the oyster shop of Widow Meagher's, where the prize story, "The Gold Bug," was written on top of an oyster barrel for a desk and with the noises of outgoing and incoming customers powerless to disturb the sublime flow of Poe's inspiration. True to tradition, the place is still a groggery but how surprised the present habitués would probably be if they knew who had preceded them in frequenting the quaint tavern. The circumstances of the drugging of Poe have ever been shrouded in mystery. No one could tell them but Poe himself and members of the Plug Uglies gang. They were members of a secret society and their lips were therefore sealed. The poet never regained consciousness long enough to relate the truth. The tales of besotted men have no value, for in all probability they were not thought of until after years had rendered any story plausible. Family tradition and records, however, have this authentic version of the finding of Poe on the night of October 2, 1849:

My grandfather, a first cousin of the poet, was passing down Baltimore Street on the night of the 3d of October, when he saw lying under the steps of the old Baltimore Museum, corner of Baltimore and Calvert Streets, a man in what he thought was a drunken stupor. It was election night, and his first thought was that it was someone overcome with the indulgence of the day. Pity for the unfortunate caused him to bend over the man, when to his amazement he saw it was his cousin, Edgar. Quickly sending a messenger to Neilson Poe, another cousin, who lived near, he took a carriage, and placing the still unconscious poet in it took him to the Washington



EDGAR ALLAN POE.

University Hospital, now the Church Home, on North Broadway. For over three days the doctors worked unavailingly to at least restore him to consciousness, but in vain. The case was diagnosed as drug poisoning and exposure, and combined with a weak heart, proved fatal. On Sunday morning, October 7, as the Angelus was ringing all over the city, his soul passed with the music of the bells out into the surging sea of death. Followed to the end by his attendant guardian, his last words have been reported, how accurately I cannot say, "Would to God someone would blow my damned brains out."

The following day a little funeral train went through the city of Baltimore. No one turned to look after it, and yet it was the Monumental City's most gifted son thus going to his long rest. Not a bell tolled, except perhaps those bells of fancy he had immortalized. Reaching Westminster churchyard, where his an-

cestors were buried, he was placed in an open grave in lot 27, by the side of David Poe, his grandfather, the Revolutionary patriot. The committal service was read by the Rev. W. D. Clemm, a distant relative of Virginia Clemm. Eyes in death the silence he craved was denied him, for the noises of the city surge outside the gates, but they do not mar the peace of the grave.

In after years, the monument provided by the family being destroyed, Miss Sara Sigourney Rice, principal of the Western Female High School, having her sympathies aroused by his neglected grave, collected funds for a small monument, under which he was reinterred with Virginia and Mrs. Clemm, with imposing ceremonies and in the presence of a large crowd, in 1875.

"Poor Edgar Poe," the world says. How poor? The rewards, the pleasures of genius lie in the soul of genius itself; what does it matter what the world thinks? Its after-remorse is enough

Head of an Oyster Barrel Used as a Desk Upon Which Was Indited the Great Puzzle Story of "The Gold Bug"—Buried Beside His Grandfather in the Churchyard at Westminster. ❖ ❖ ❖

tribute to genius. "Oh, if he would return we would recognize his greatness." But the answer comes true to humanity as ever, "Ye have Moses and the prophets, how would you believe one who returned from the dead?" The manuscripts of Edgar Allan Poe, sold for mere pittance, are veritable gold-mines to their present fortunate owners, the family who disowned his father are proud to claim his son, and the literati of this and foreign countries have no hesitancy in ranking him as one of the "American Immortals."

A PÆAN ❖ By EDGAR ALLAN POE.

How shall the burial rite be read?
The solemn song be sung?
The requiem for the loveliest dead,
That ever died so young?

Her friends are gazing on her,
And on her gaudy bier,
And weep!—oh! to dishonor
Dead beauty with a tear!

They loved her for her wealth—
And they hated her for her pride—
But she grew in feeble health,
And they love her—that she died.

They tell me (while they speak
Of her "costly broder'd pall")
That my voice is growing weak—
That I should not sing at all—

Or that my tone should be
Tuned to such solemn song
So mournfully—so mournfully,
That the dead may feel no wrong.

Therefore, to thee this night
I will no requiem raise,
But waft thee on thy flight,
With a Paean of old days.

But she is gone above,
With young Hope at her side
And I am drunk with love
Of the dead, who is my bride.—

Of the dead—dead who lies
All perfumed there,
With the death upon her eyes,
And the life upon her hair.

Thus on the coffin loud and long
I strike—the murmur sent
Through the gray chambers to my song,
Shall be the accompaniment.

Thou diedst in thy life's June—
But thou didst not die too fair;
Thou didst not die too soon,
Nor with too calm an air.

From more than friends on earth,
Thy life and love are given,
To join the untainted mirth
Of more than thrones in heaven.—

LAW OF THE CONSERVATION OF ENERGY IN LARGE CITIES

"JUST see those people picking up tin cans, John," said Mrs. Glennan, who was a Vere de Vere. "I wonder why they do it?" The big sixty-horse-power Mors car was sweeping on past one of the large "dumps," where the ashes of the city's fires are thrown. "Those people will sell the cans to old rag and bone men, who in turn pass them on to large factories in New York. There the tin cans are made into—you'd never guess it, my dear—weights for elevators and window sashes," said old Glennan, who started in life as a newsboy and is a graduate of the University of Hard Knocks.

Mr. Glennan is right, even though what he says sounds suspiciously like a fairy tale. Tin cans are put to other purposes besides quick lunches for goats and persuaders for the luckless small dog. When the cans are delivered at the foundry they are piled up under a "hood" of iron, which tapers into a chimney. They are then sprinkled with oil, and set afire. The heat consumes the labels, loosens the dirt, and melts the soldering. The soldering is collected, washed, melted again, and cast into ingots which are sold.

Some cans have lapped joints and melt apart completely. These are sorted out

and the sheets of tin are straightened and bound into bundles. They are sold—wonderful to say—to the trunkmakers, who re-enforce the corners of Saratogas with them. So that the can from which Mrs. Wiggs ate her tomatoes reappears in social circles as the guardian of Mrs. Chatfield Chatfield-Taylor's trunk, at Naples or the German spas.

Buttonmakers buy the strips of tin and use them for the discs out of which cloth-covered buttons are made. Thus, Grotrux may wear upon his silk-lined Prince Albert the very tin which Lusty Rhodes cast aside as he passed the ash heap.

The other machine-made cans are loaded into carts and taken to the "cupola," which is a big furnace, fed with cans and coke by turn. When the tin is heated to liquid form and the slag skimmed off, the metal is poured off into molds in the form of weights.

"The next time you ride in an elevator, my dear," said old Glennan, "think how many people beside the lift-boy have worked to take you to the bargain floor."

"My dear John: why do you tell me such things? Good gracious, how very coarse!"